

MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON

# *GROUP RELATIONS*

OF NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

FIRST

ANNUAL

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# Foreword

This Report is a brief story of the Commission's efforts to resolve the misunderstandings and relieve the tensions which result from prejudice and discrimination.

Brotherhood, group relations, human rights—are all just words to most people. But in this generation of teen-age strife and adult conflict, they take on a far greater importance.

For giving meaning to these concepts and interpreting the work of the Commission to the citizens of Newark, we extend our most sincere gratitude to the Newark Evening News, The Newark Star-Ledger, The New Jersey Afro-American, The New Jersey Herald News and The Jewish News. To Marjorie Linn for her helping hand when we were without a secretary, our deepest appreciation; to Ira A. Gissen, our warmest admiration for his intelligent aid in writing and designing this Report; to Handy-Boesser Photographers and The Boys Club of Newark, acknowledgments for many of the pictures used to illustrate this story.

Finally, our sincere thanks to all those individuals and organizations without whose volunteer assistance our work could not have been accomplished.

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## LUCKY US

Newark has been lucky. Take Detroit, for example. Until 1943, no one thought much about human relations or group relations—outside of academic circles. Then, one day in 1943, Detroit exploded. It wasn't



*As the twig  
is bent . . .*

a bomb or a factory catastrophe. It was people. Thousands of normal, every-day, average people caught up in a riot. The jails were packed with folks who had gone on a rampage. Hundreds were hospitalized, and a few more names were added to the obituaries.

Something had gone terribly wrong. What happened to the great American melting pot that supposedly was simmering so peacefully? In fact, had there really been a melting pot, after all?

Alert citizens began asking themselves and their neighbors some mighty basic questions. Would Detroit-like riots occur in their communities? The fear was great, and slowly but surely city after city began to mobilize its human resources to prevent community explosions.

Many cities realized that they had been lucky. Newark was one of them. Today, seventy-eight American cities have municipal commissions on group relations. What was this miracle that had taken place—that changed ignorance and indifference to knowledge and action? After Detroit, people asked:

## What Had Gone Wrong?

They looked for the answer in  
economics  
    psychology  
        sociology  
            anthropology  
                psychiatry  
                    and philosophy;  
in every field, the answer was pretty much the same. People didn't melt  
—not even in the American melting pot. This was not the fault of  
democracy, this was its fruit. People may dress alike, go to the same  
movies, watch the same TV programs and read the same newspapers, but  
inside, each man is an individual. We are not stamped from the same  
mold on a totalitarian assembly line. How then are we different? In an

*... so the  
tree should grow.*



infinite number of ways, to be sure. As far as group relations are concerned, these differences include:

age

sex

race

religion

national origin

social class and

economic status.

Each group has something wonderfully different to contribute to our democratic way of life. Much like the instruments of a symphony orchestra: playing together they make beautiful music. But they also can make a horrible noise playing without regard to their neighbors. Detroit showed the country what could happen when the music went sour.



*Here's  
the art and craft  
of democracy*



# New Jersey

## Breaks the Ice

In 1945, our State won national attention when it enacted the Anti-Discrimination Law of that year. Experience in administering the law showed the need for certain changes; and in 1949 major amendments and supplements were made. The State recognized the need for implementing the law at the municipal level, and in Section 9, Paragraph "e", the law states:

The mayors or chief executive officers of the municipalities in the State may appoint local commissions on civil rights to aid in effectuating the purposes of this act . . .

Consequently, in 1950 a group of Newark citizens were appointed to the Newark Civil Rights Commission by the Mayor. They laid the groundwork for increasing the effectiveness of the state law in our city. After two years of work and study, Newark's Commission on Civil Rights recognized the limitations of its effectiveness and recommended that the Commission be provided with a full-time, professional, executive director and the necessary assistants.

Following this recommendation, the City Commission voted into law the Newark Fair Practice Ordinance, officially establishing the

Mayor's Commission on Group Relations. The Ordinance's Declaration of Policy states, in part:

. . . this local law is enacted to provide an instrumentality through which the City of Newark may officially encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect by all groups in the city, eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, discrimination and disorder and help give effect to the guarantee of equal rights for all as assured by the Constitution and laws of the State.

## The First Step

Under the Ordinance, the first major move was the appointment of an Executive Director and a Commission of fifteen representative citizens. A 10-point program of operations, for the first year was announced:

1. Sponsor a Fair Employment Practice Week.
2. Institute a Police Training Course in Human Relations.
3. Program service of speakers and films for all interested organizations.
4. Survey community employment practices.
5. An Adult Education Workshop in Human Relations.
6. Town Meetings.
7. Open forums.
8. Explorations and investigation of tension incidents.
9. Assist the State Division Against Discrimination in educating the public in better human relations.
10. Prevention of community upheavals.





*For many, recreation is where they find it*

By any standard of comparison, this would have to be considered an ambitious, inclusive program. By this standard, we can attempt to measure the Commission's achievements and failures in its first year of operation under the new ordinance. Let's take a look at the record.



*"It ain't fair—why can't we work, too?"*

## F. E. P. WEEK

On February 15th, the Mayor officially proclaimed Newark's Fair Employment Practice Week. The coincidence of the date with National Brotherhood Week had been planned by the Commission in order to mutually implement the two observances.

Dozens of posters, prepared by the Newark Public School of Fine and Industrial Art, were displayed throughout downtown Newark. Information booths were set up in City Hall and the Public Service Building with cooperating civic groups providing the personnel to staff them. Principal stores provided window displays.

A town meeting on Fair Employment Practices was held at West Side High School, with participating speakers representing government, industry and labor. The local press gave the observance excellent support throughout the week.





*"Let's talk things over."*

## NEWARK SPEAKS UP

Encouraging the citizens of Newark to participate in open public discussions of Human Relations issues is a vital activity of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations.

### Medicine and Minorities

The suicide of a New Jersey physician, who was unable to obtain a license because of his foreign medical education, shocked the public to active concern. Consequently, "Discrimination in Medical Colleges" was the topic of the first open forum sponsored by the Commission.

Dr. Harold A. Murray, then President of the Medical Society of New Jersey; the late Dr. Max Danzis, past President of the State Society of Surgeons; Dr. Reynold E. Burch, New Jersey Regional Vice-President of the National Medical Association; and Dr. Edwin H. Albano, Director of Laboratories at Columbus and Clara Maass Memorial Hospitals, were the speakers. At the end of the discussion, the Commission voted unanimously in favor of a state medical college as the best means of providing professional medical opportunities for all citizens.

The growing climate of public opinion resulted in the state legislature passing a bill providing for the licensing of physicians educated abroad. Further, a state committee for the establishment of a New Jersey medical school has been organized. These actions demonstrate the value of the Commission's efforts in arousing the public to express itself.

## Crime Doesn't Play

Newark and other cities, throughout the United States, have become increasingly concerned about juvenile delinquency. A national study of the problem is being conducted by Senator Hendrickson. "What's happening to our kids?" is the cry heard in every quarter.

Alert to the smoke signals of intergroup strife, the Mayor's Commission began a study of teen-age tensions many months ago—even before the Senate Subcommittee started its hearings.

On March 11th, the Commission on Group Relations called a meeting of seventy-five community and neighborhood leaders and heard recommendations to relieve teen-age intergroup tensions. At the close of the forum, a steering committee was appointed to lay out a program for the future operations of the projected Citizens Committee, and to build up a list of citizens from youth serving organizations, who should participate in such a body.





*Street shower—room shower, do they all have a choice?*

Thirty citizens and several teen-agers from four city high schools met at City Hall, in April. After a short survey of the background leading to this meeting, by the Chairman of the Commission, a group discussion took place. Ideas and plans for continuing the work of this committee on the problems of juvenile delinquency, teen-age gangs and related problems of youth in our community were considered.

The steering committee met again and planned a second open forum. They invited Dr. Herman Long, community self-survey specialist from Fiske University, Nashville, Tennessee; and Edward Silver, James E. McCarthy, Joseph Barbaro and Kenneth Marshall, of the New York City Youth Board, as advisors on the general problem of youth in a metropolitan community.

This public hearing on teen-age gang wars and racial tension was held by the Commission in May. Edward S. Silver, Assistant District Attorney of Kings County, New York, asserted that the responsibility in this matter is solely that of the City Commission and not that of volunteer social workers. He recommended that the City Commission:

1. Appoint a permanent Municipal Committee of career workers, and adequately finance them.
2. Insist on closer cooperation between social agencies and police.
3. Remove existing problems from the realm of politics.
4. Lead through specially trained career workers rather than attempt to smash the teen-age gangs by punitive action.

# LAW AND ORDER

On April 2nd, the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations voted to investigate several charges of alleged police brutality. Three members of the Commission were appointed as an investigating committee. They met in conference with representatives of: Newark Branch of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Urban League, Essex County Intergroup Council, Joint Council for Civil Rights, Baxter Terrace Community Association, Americans for Democratic Action, Essex-West Hudson C.I.O. Council and the Essex A.F. of L. Trades Council.

The special committee, after several additional conferences, made an interim report to the Commission and referred its findings to the Grand Jury.

On April 4th, the Public Safety Director ordered the Chief of Police to investigate one specific charge. In May the Essex County Grand Jury exonerated the Newark Police Department of the specific charge. Later several Commission members seriously questioned the thoroughness of the hearings and called for further investigation by the Mayor's Commission.

The interest and action by the Commission began to produce results almost immediately. In early April, the Public Safety Director appointed a Human Relations Police Squad specializing in the investigation of complaints of racial or religious discrimination.

By the end of April, a course in Human Relations for Newark Police was underway at the Newark Police Training Academy. Representative policemen from the Newark Police Department attended a series of eight classes. At this writing, no further classes have been undertaken, but it is the sincere hope of this Commission that the Police Department will, in the immediate future, begin its second course and follow more closely the recommendations presented to it by this body.

# AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

In the area of preventive action, the program of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations ranges from the investigation of specific, apparently isolated incidents to the exploration of major underlying causes of group relations problems in the City of Newark. In fact, all activities of the Commission are either directly concerned with this central focus of tension or spring from it.

In December, 1952, a committee was appointed to investigate racial tension in the McKinley School area. A cooperative arrangement for the solution of this problem was developed with the Board of Education. Such action is typical of the continuing investigations carried on by the Commission, either through committees or the individual action of the Executive Director.

*There's really  
no problem here*





## On Guard

Anticipating possible tension incidents might be considered one of the Commission's basic functions. An example of these efforts was the presentation in April, of a Fair Election Pledge to be endorsed by candidates for election to the City Commission. The pledge was planned to prevent allusions and insinuations against race, religion and nationality from being used in the heat of the campaign.

## Good News

The problem of discriminatory language in classified advertising was presented to the Publisher of the Newark News, in a conference with the Chairman and Director of the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, and representatives of the Essex County Intergroup Council. The Publisher agreed to the necessity of giving further consideration to his paper's general policy.

In particular, he agreed to instruct those employees working directly with the public in the classified advertising department to do or say nothing which might perpetuate prejudicial attitudes or implement those discriminatory policies which show some need for alteration.

## Job Rights

The job-hunt is no sport. To many people, it's a desperate matter. It can be rough for folks whose complexion isn't pale, who don't go to the "right" house of worship, or whose name sounds "foreign."

Ask them—those who were the last to be hired, and are among the first being fired—they'll tell you, "It's rough."

The right to a job is basic. No job—no eats! (It's as simple as that.)

To many people, this is a matter of concern. It certainly is to the Mayor's Commission. At the request of several group relations agencies, the Commission is studying this problem. In order to help businessmen adjust their personnel policies according to democratic concepts, the Commission plans to give them the fullest cooperation.

# SCHOOL DAYS

Section V, Paragraph 3, of the Newark Fair Practice Ordinance says that one duty of the Commission shall be to "Formulate and carry out educational programs that will aid in eliminating and preventing all types of prejudice and discrimination."

## We Can Learn

In keeping with this function, in September our Commission invited the executive directors of Newark's ten major group relations agencies to address an open meeting of the Mayor's Commission. The purpose of this was to inform both Commission members and citizens of Newark, of the nature and scope of activities of these organizations as they relate to the Mayor's Commission. Those agencies which cooperated in this effort were: Division Against Discrimination, the State Department of Education; Civil Rights Commission, Essex-West Hudson C.I.O. Council; Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith; Essex County Intergroup Council; American Jewish Committee; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; American Jewish Congress; Essex County Joint Council for Civil Rights; The Urban League; and the National Conference of Christians and Jews.



## All Can Learn

One of the biggest jobs in the field of Human Relations is that of education for action. More particularly, a key problem is that of reaching people who have a general awareness of group conflicts and are concerned about democratic practices in our society. Conscience pangs can be a wonderful thing, if people know what to do about them.

Therefore, in 1953, as in the last two years, the Commission awarded scholarships to the Rutgers University Workshop in Human Relations. Newark school teachers and policemen have been the recipients of the awards.

In brief, the job of education in Human Relations involves:

**LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEMS**—What are the symptoms of intergroup tension and conflict?

**LEARNING TO GET ALL THE FACTS**—What are the most fundamental causes of Human Relations problems and how can they be determined?

**LEARNING THE TECHNIQUES**—What are the professional tools for reducing conflicts and how are they used in treating a problem?

To this end, the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations joined with the West Side Adult School in cooperatively sponsoring a Workshop in Human Relations. Forty-five regularly enrolled students, and a number of visitors attended the ten sessions of the Workshop, from October 5th to December 7th, 1953. Many interested organizations sponsored scholarships for the course. With Dr. Leon Mones, Assistant Superintendent of



Newark Schools serving as moderator, the following program was presented:

*America's No. 1 Problem*—How do our internal religious and racial tensions affect our Nation's role of world leadership today?

Panel: Dr. Edward F. Kennelly, Supt. of Newark Schools.

Dr. John T. McSharry, Administrator, West Side Adult School.

David M. Litwin, Chairman, Mayor's Commission on Group Relations.

Dr. Harold Lett, Asst. Chief, Division Against Discrimination.

*Fact and Fiction about Race and Nationality*—What is the scientific truth about the races of mankind?

Speaker: Dr. Melvin Tumin, Social Anthropologist, Princeton University.

*The Role of Religion and Religious Organizations in Advancing Better Individual and Group Relations in the Community.*

Panel: Dr. Richard Beck, Asst. Supt. of Schools, Jersey City.

Dr. Francis Hammond, Head of Psychology Dept., Seton Hall University.

Sylvan H. Kohn, Director, Adult Education, Jewish Education Association of Essex County.

*The Price of Prejudice*—A study of frustration and aggression in children and adults: What are some of the economic, sociological and psychological dynamics of prejudice and discrimination?

Speaker: Dr. Harold Lett, Asst. Chief, Division Against Discrimination, State Department of Education.

*The Civil Rights Laws of New Jersey*—What are YOUR rights? How can you use and protect them to best advantage in your schools and communities?

Panel: Myra A. Blakeslee, Division Against Discrimination.

C. Willard Heckel, Asst. Dean of Rutgers University Law School.

*Social Dynamics and the Group Process*—How can you get people to think together and motivate them to action on your neighborhood problems?

Speaker: Mrs. Florence Ackerman, Rutgers University.

*Youth Problems and Group Relations*—What do we know about the causes, nature, symptoms, and control of social delinquency: What can we do to alleviate misunderstanding and teen-age gang conflicts?

Panel: Messrs. Silver and McCarthy, New York City Youth Board, New York.

Benjamin Epstein, Vice-President, American Jewish Congress of New Jersey.

*The Functions of Official Commissions on Civil Rights and Group Relations*—What can they do to help you and your children? How can you aid them in making a better community for all to live in?

Panel: Maurice O'Sullivan, Chairman of Civil Rights Commission, Jersey City, New Jersey.

Donald Karrakis, East Orange Commission, New Jersey.

David M. Litwin, Chairman, Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, Newark, New Jersey.

*Tools and Techniques for Stimulating Action*—How do you run a Film Forum? What is a Rumor Clinic? How can one respond to prejudiced remarks in public? How do you lead an informal group discussion?

Panel: Daniel S. Anthony, Director, Mayor's Commission on Group Relations.

Brant Coopersmith, Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith.

Mrs. Fraida Shapiro, Essex County Intergroup Council.

*Solving the Problem that Bothers You*—Techniques for utilizing the structure and resources of your community in diagnosing and solving a problem in housing integration.

Panel: Edward Rutledge, Public Housing Administration Racial Relations Officer.

Arnold Harris, Director, Essex County Intergroup Council.

Miss Alene D. Sumkins, Supervisor of Leasing and Occupancy, Newark Housing Authority.

At the last session, the majority of the students stated that the Workshop should be carried on each semester in another section of Newark. Many voted for an advanced Workshop in which they might build on the good foundation they now have.



## LOOKING AHEAD

The Mayor's Commission on Group Relations sees a long, hard pull on the uphill grade toward a community free from the ills of prejudice and discrimination.



*"O God, for a better day."*

To accomplish our objectives we need more manpower and support. We approach the new year with a confidence and hope engendered by the NEWARK CHARTER COMMISSION's proposal for the organization of the New City Government which we quote in full:



*"The Mayor's Commission on Group Relations  
(Civil Rights Commission) is essential to carry out  
the state policy against discrimination based on race,  
color, creed or national origin. In a city whose popu-  
lation is made up of many races and nationalities, The  
Civil Rights Commission has a unique opportunity to  
provide leadership in achieving the ideals of our  
democratic faith. There should be no question of the  
importance of giving full support on the local level  
to a policy that is expressed in our State Constitution  
and Statutes."*\*

\*Final Report of the Newark Charter Commission, September 3, 1953; pg. 72.

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